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# Washington and Lee University

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## A Time to Examine, Affirm Our Commitments

### A Message to the Community on Dec. 1, 2014

The publication last month of the Rolling Stone article describing a brutal rape at the University of Virginia has led not only to urgent discussions at UVA. about that incident, but also to more general discussions everywhere about sexual assault on college campuses.

Here at Washington and Lee, we have spoken in the past about rape and sexual misconduct. We have carefully and continually examined and refined our processes and procedures for dealing with cases and for educating students to prevent such intolerable behavior from occurring. We have asserted our community's values and stressed how disrespect for others for any reason is simply not acceptable.

These most recent discussions serve to remind us that we must always be willing to ask the hard questions and continually examine our approaches.

But we can never say this enough: Mistreatment of others is wrong by any standard of our society, by any standard of right or wrong. It is especially wrong in this community, where we — rightly — insist on developing within our students the moral obligation to treat others with respect at all times and under all conditions; where we demand that members of our community never stand idly by when we see others violate those values. It is wrong anywhere. It is especially wrong at this university.

This is a time for all of us, and for our students especially, to stand up for what we know is right and to affirm a commitment to building a culture that will not tolerate any mistreatment of others and most especially rape or sexual assault. I have asked Vice President for Student Affairs Sidney Evans to build upon our past efforts and continue to work directly with student leaders in the weeks ahead to have them address candidly the painful but important questions raised

by the events reported in the Rolling Stone article. It is an opportunity, a difficult and sad one to be sure, to examine our own commitments and to affirm them more strongly than ever.

I do not know exactly what forms those expressions will take or should take. But as we approach a time on the university calendar when fraternities and sororities have formal recruitment, members of Greek organizations in particular should state firmly and unequivocally what they believe, to recommit to the highest values they purport to stand for, and even to be at the forefront in defining a campus culture that is based on treating every person with dignity and respect.

Even as we continue to assess the effectiveness with which we address these important issues, I want to stress that I am confident in our procedures, confident in our policies, confident in our approach, and especially confident in our values. What I am asking of our students now is a deep renewal and understanding of Washington and Lee's values - and a pledge on their parts to create a community in which it must always be absolutely clear that rape, mistreatment, disrespect and abuse of others in any form is totally antithetical to everything for which we stand.

As a reminder to the community, our Title IX coordinator, Lauren Kozak, is available to answer any questions members of the community might have about our policies, which you can review along with the various resources available at the Sexual Misconduct Resources page: [www.wlu.edu/sexual-misconduct-resources](http://www.wlu.edu/sexual-misconduct-resources).